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# COE faculty named Inclusive Excellence Fellow

August 19, 2021



Karin Fisher, Ph.D., associate professor of special education, was selected to the inaugural cohort of Georgia Southern University's Inclusive Excellence Fellows in fall 2021.

Inclusive excellence is one of the five pillars of the Georgia Southern Strategic Plan. Achieving the goals of the plan requires the engagement and support of the entire Georgia Southern community and was the driving force for the creation of the Faculty and Staff Fellows for Inclusive Excellence program. The Fellows, under the direction of the Associate Vice President for Inclusive Excellence and Chief Diversity Officer TaJuan Wilson, Ph.D., will lead the development and implementation of inclusive excellence initiatives.

Fisher was selected as one of four faculty fellows for the University. As a Fellow, Fisher will assist in the development of sustainable goals and strategies to increase faculty recruitment, retention and advancement as well as support and assess the impact of programs in place; take lead in conducting research on 'best practices' from other institutions on in the areas of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI); engage in strategic data collection; and develop, facilitate and evaluate DEI related training for the University community.

Fisher joined the College of Education in 2016, and provides instruction on special education to in- and pre-service teachers at the bachelor's, master's, and education specialist levels. Her primary line of research is on the inclusion of students with disabilities in extracurricular science, technology, engineering and mathematics activities. Fisher has served the profession in many ways. She currently is the chair of the Georgia Department of Education State Advisory Panel for Special Education, the president-elect of the Georgia Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), and the chair of the Early Career Faculty Special Interest Group of the Teacher Education Division of CEC.

For more information on the Inclusive Excellence Faculty and Staff Fellows at Georgia Southern, visit <https://president.georgiasouthern.edu/inclusive-excellence/inclusive-excellence-faculty-and-staff-fellows/>

Posted in [Faculty Highlights](#)

Tags: [DEI Committee](#), [Inclusive Excellence](#), [Karin Fisher](#), [Special Education](#)

# Toledo is College of Education's 'Instructor of the Year'

August 19, 2021



Courtney Toledo, clinical instructor in the Department of Elementary and Special Education, has been named the recipient of the Georgia Southern University College of Education's (COE) 2021 Instructor/Lecturer Faculty Award in Teaching and Service Award.

Toledo joined the COE in 2017, and serves as a clinical instructor in the dual certification (elementary and special education) program on the Statesboro Campus. Along with teaching both special and elementary education courses, Toledo also serves as a field supervisor for pre-service teachers across all levels of the program.

"Ms. Toledo has been a very important member of our department," said Yasar Bodur, Ph.D., chair of the Department of Elementary and Special Education. "She serves future teachers in multiple programs and is known to be a very caring and knowledgeable teacher. Ms. Toledo is someone everybody in the department can count on."

As a part of the College's Professional Development Schools (PDS) initiative, Toledo also provides mentorship to teachers who are new to the career field at Langston Chapel Elementary School in Statesboro, one of five designated PDS locations. In addition, Toledo works with Langston Chapel Elementary to provide training and development opportunities for the teaching staff. In Fall 2020, she co-developed and led a professional development on co-teaching in inclusion classrooms.

An avid supporter and volunteer for education, Toledo has served as a Spelling Bee pronouncer for Bulloch County Schools, annual EdCamp moderator, volunteer for multiple classrooms for Read Across America Day, camp coordinator for Camp RAD (Recreation for Adolescents with Disabilities), and Special Olympics bowling coach.

"These activities have allowed me to become more involved in our university community as well as develop meaningful relationships with members of the communities we serve," said Toledo. "Service is not only a huge part of my job as a non-tenure track instructor, but it is also something that I am passionate about. I have aimed over the last two years to incorporate more service activities that relate directly to my passion for supporting new educators as well as furthering opportunities to demonstrate my leadership skills."

Prior to joining the College, Toledo was a teacher in elementary and special education classrooms across Georgia. She earned a bachelor's in early childhood education from Georgia Southern ('10), a M.Ed. in Multiple and Severe Disabilities from Georgia State, and is currently pursuing an [Ed.D. in Curriculum Studies](#) at Georgia Southern.

The Instructor/Lecturer Faculty Award in Teaching and Service Award, created in 2020, recognizes and rewards non-tenure track faculty who have demonstrated excellence in the areas of teaching and service. Non-tenure track faculty who have completed at least three years of service in the College are eligible for consideration. Evaluation criteria include consistent, successful service activities, diverse service, uncompensated service, evaluations of teaching, evidence of professional development, engagement in curricular activities, and collaborative work with P-12 educators.

“I feel honored to be awarded the Instructor Award for Teaching and Service,” said Toledo. “I am so grateful to my colleagues who inspire me and have supported me throughout my time at Georgia Southern. They push me to continuously improve my teaching, and I share this recognition with each of them.”

The Instructor/Lecturer Faculty Award in Teaching and Service Award is funded by donor support to the College of Education. Donations can be made to the COE Instructor/Lecturer Faculty Award in Teaching and Service Award by designating donations to fund GS4502.

Posted in [Faculty Highlights](#)

Tags: [COE Instructor/Lecturer Award](#), [Courtney Toledo](#), [Elementary Education](#), [Special Education](#)

## **Beverly Miller receives the College’s Commitment to Diversity Award**

August 19, 2021



Beverly Miller, Ph.D., assistant professor of elementary science education, was named the 2021 recipient of the Georgia Southern University College of Education’s (COE) Commitment to Diversity Award.

A science teacher for over 30 years, Miller joined the College in 2018 where she has been able to share both her research on minorities in STEM as well as her own experiences as an Afro Caribbean immigrant female with future teachers at the University.

“My career initiatives have focused on the access and inclusion for marginalized groups that included those of African descent, Latinx heritage and Native Americans through educational opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and career pathways,” explained Miller. “All students regardless of race need to be exposed to a curriculum that incorporates counter narratives so that knowledge production reflects all people. These counter narratives remove the prevailing belief that those who are excluded are absent

because they have not made noteworthy contributions; this is a misconception.”

Miller’s research and service are often interwoven, as she provides alternative learning opportunities through STEM camps and field experiences for minority students. In 2017, she developed Ventaja Panama, offering place-based, hands-on STEM education to Panamanian youth and local teachers while also ensuring that the students’ basic needs were met. Since the success of the first camp, Miller has reached over 300 students in Panama over the last four years, and held the first United States based Ventaja Camp on the Georgia Southern Statesboro Campus this summer where some students were able to experience a college campus. Students visited the University’s museum, participated in experiments in the chemistry lab and dined with members of the Georgia Southern football team.

Miller has published book chapters and articles based on the inclusive education model for the Panama-based camps as well as personal reflections of “walking in two worlds” where she considers her Panamanian identity

as well as her American educational opportunities. In her personal story, she shares that in the 1960's a religious group visiting Panama offered her uncle an opportunity to fund his education in the United States.

“This one event would shift the socio-economic trajectory for our entire family,” she said. “My grandmother later came to the United States. Employed as a domestic worker, she saved her money and sent for my mother and me. I was six years old. I have received all of my education in the United States. Today, I hold a terminal degree, a Ph.D., in my field. My work as a social justice advocate is how I acknowledge this privilege and work to pay it forward.”

Her research has also been acknowledged as advancing the conversation on race and gender, as she was one of six authors whose articles were selected by SAGE Open (an open access, peer-reviewed, academic journal published by SAGE Publications) as a national resource for the racial discourse taking place after the murder of George Floyd and resulting national protests.

“My work both locally and abroad continues to challenge structures of privilege and educational access rooted in assumptions regarding race and socio-economic power,” she said. “This, I believe, is the work of us all, so I am humbled by your recognition of what I believe is my reason for being.”

The College's Commitment to Diversity Award was designed to recognize a faculty or staff member who demonstrates a sustained commitment to diversity and inclusion.

For more information about the Commitment to Diversity Award and the [College's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee](#), visit <https://coe.georgiasouthern.edu/diversity-and-inclusion-in-coe/>

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